



ATLANTIC CENTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Developing Strategies for Community-Based Natural Resource Management: An Exchange Program for Conservation Leaders from the Middle East and New England

November 2009 – June 2010

QLF is coordinating a program to promote community-based natural resource management through international exchange activities that link initiatives in New England and the Middle East. This program aims to enhance the capacity of a new group of emerging environmental professionals and their partner organizations in the United States and the Middle East to work across borders and foster discussion and collaboration in order to develop community-based initiatives for natural resource management. QLF is working in cooperation with local partner organizations in the Middle East and New England to conduct this Program, *Developing Strategies for Community-Based Natural Resource Management*, which is designed to help create mutual understanding and partnerships for natural resource management by strengthening community and environmental leadership, increasing NGO collaboration, and emphasizing community service.

Background

This program builds on QLF's years of experience working in the Middle East as well as our cross-border expertise and ability to maintain trust. Since 1992, QLF's Middle East Program has hosted Egyptian, Israeli, Jordanian, Lebanese, Palestinian, and North American Fellows. QLF has sponsored fourteen Fellowship Exchanges between Middle Eastern and North American participants. These exchanges have fostered cross-boundary understanding and cooperation among the participants, which has contributed to bioregional initiatives, natural resource conservation, and peace-building efforts in the Middle East. This project addresses the continued need to find common ground for supporting coexistence in the region, because natural resource management and community development are issues that people from the West Bank, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon and neighboring countries all agree are critically important. They recognize that environmental issues do not respect political borders; migratory birds, fresh water, clean air, and wildlife are all part of the bio-region of the Middle East.

Program Objectives

The objectives of the program are to provide practical training and leadership skills, enhance mutual understanding and trust through citizen diplomacy, create a network of environmental and community development professionals who will work towards the improved management of natural resources in their communities and countries, expand participant knowledge of natural resource management issues across borders, and generate a collection of case studies that will be used to create transferable strategies and practices for community-based resource management.

Program Activities

The Middle East Program, *Developing Strategies for Community-Based Natural Resource Management*, consists of a series of activities divided into five Phases designed to maximize the opportunities for dialogue, understanding, and collaboration among North American and Middle Eastern Fellows and organizations. These include:

- Phase I: Fellowship to New England – Eight environmental professionals from Israel, Jordan, the West Bank, and Lebanon will travel to New England for two weeks to participate in an orientation, a training workshop, a study tour of site visits, individual community service assignments, and a final debriefing. Fellows will visit the sites of the case studies, organizations, and communities of their counterpart participants in New England. (*April 2010*)

- Phase II: Communication and Networking – Continuous professional and cultural exchange following the Fellowships through bi-monthly communication and networking (*April 2010 – June 2010*)
- Phase III: Fellowship to the Middle East – Eight environmental professionals from New England will travel to the Middle East for two weeks for Fellowship similar to the exchange held in New England. Fellows will visit the sites of the case studies of their counterpart participants in the Middle East. (*May 2010*)
- Phase IV: Workshop – Workshop for participants from the Middle East and to be held in Jordan. Reunite alumni in the Middle East, to provide suggestions on community-based natural resource management and create partnerships for further work in the future (*May 2010*)
- Phase V: Publication - Featuring case studies and narratives from all Fellows and recommendations for effective community-based natural resource management (*June 2010*)

Participants

We will have eight Middle Eastern and eight North American participants in these exchange activities, and they will include emerging environmental professionals, who are community leaders, political leaders, educators, and/or advocates for youth, or persons who show the capacity to become effective in those roles. The Fellows will come primarily from NGOs, but qualified candidates from governmental organizations, public agencies, universities, community groups, and other organizations. Collaboration with NGOs enables working with people at the grassroots level, where education has an immediate effect, and where confidence in coexistence can be strengthened. Preference will be given to Middle East Fellow applicants who have spent little or no time in the U.S. and to North American Fellows who have never traveled to the Middle East. We will compose a diverse and balanced group of Fellows who can engage in long-term, long distance dialogue with colleagues and partner organizations across borders.

Program Themes

The *Developing Strategies for Community-Based Natural Resource Management* project will address natural resource management across and within international boundaries with a collaborative approach that examines several interconnected themes. Within these themes, the program will expose participants to a variety of strategies and practical tools for the community-based management of natural resources. These include:

- Participatory planning and civic engagement - Engaging communities in planning, problem solving, decision-making, and developing a shared vision for their community's future.
- Leadership and organization management – Focusing on practical leadership training as well as professional exchanges and dialogue of shared experiences
- Cross-boundary cooperation – Creating collaborative efforts and partnerships between individuals and environmental and community-development NGOs
- Community service – Building trust and engaging conservation leaders in service to community
- Long-term participation and collaboration – Providing participants with a continuous, expansive, and sustained environmental network for planning community-based natural resource management initiatives

QLF Contact

For more information on the *Community-Based Natural Resource Management Fellowship Exchange*, please contact Sami Backleh at sbackleh@QLF.org or Shane Jerome at sjerome@qlf.org. An overview of QLF's Middle East Program is located at http://www.qlf.org/internat_program/mideast_program.htm.

The Mission of QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment (part of the Quebec-Labrador Foundation) is to support the rural communities and environment of eastern Canada and New England and create models for stewardship of natural resources and cultural heritage that can be applied worldwide. This program is funded in part through a grant from the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Office of Citizen Exchanges. For more information, visit our website at <http://www.qlf.org>